A Gemstone

Of

The Babylon Walls

Sundus Ash-Shawi

Translated by

Muhammad Mustafa Al Saket



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Contents

Dedication

TO INANNA, who has rested in peace, to Hammurabi, who if he were resurrected, he would see a curious fact, and to Nebuchadnezzar, who has left a significant trace in history that no one ever forgets.

To Mesopotamia, which I yearn for, to Tigris and Euphrates, to date palms of my country and my country's freshwater. To each man who has passed away, then left a beautiful trace in our hearts and souls, I do dedicate this story.

The Author



The Story in Brief

Love manifests again in this story talks about the love of Maryia for her spouse, her small and large family. It integrates the old history of forebears and the life of descendants some time ago whereby their existence upon the land of Iraq. Their past was considered a dwell in Mosul; their present-day was regarded as their life in Baghdad.

Nevertheless, somewhere between then and now, they would have some stories and different events; moreover, they would stop over in some cities of Iraq. During their journey, they would know and see several authenticated and interested old-age historic sites and monuments of Iraq. Subsequently, the readers would increase their essential historical information and would not feel the deadlock of history. Instead, they would enjoy the story’s central characters and look closely into the old and new civilisations that elapsed upon the land of Great Iraq.

As Bashir Muhammad Al-Saqladi said:

I cried. Is Crying Heart useless?

Parting lovers and severe and nostalgic!

What is the meaning of life if we parted?

It did not work wailing; I do not know.

Neither Keepsake to have mercy upon me,

Nor longings leave me to my sleep.

Parting lovers how much shook my passion.

And even to meet them, I still cry.



After Maryia had relaxed, she let herself go to call to mind her childhood when she was a presentable little girl with striking hazel eyes and thick and curly hair. She travelled through a world of memories to remind her of living with her parents in Nineveh Governorate [1], Northern Iraq; that city's colour was dark green like her favourite clothes.

She was an only child. She called to mind when she was assembling Anemone coronaria every spring to give it as a present to her mother, who very much adored roses; her mother was holding Maryia in a warm embrace and kissing her. They were engaging in conversation about the school whereby the

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([1]) The Leaning Minaret is one of the most prominent historical monuments in Mosul. It is part of the Great Al-Nuri Masjid, which was built in the sixth century AH. It was known as the Leaning because of its inclination. However, it was called the long minaret in the past. It is now printed on the Iraqi Dinar, denomination of ten thousand dinars. It is located in the western part of the city of Mosul, where the western bank of the Tigris River, which divides the city into two parts, is called the locality of the Great Mosque. He ordered the construction of the al-Hadba' minaret, the governor of Mosul, Imad Ad-Din Zengi, which is estimated to be sixty-five meters high and seventeen meters wide and is among the seventeen leaning towers around the world. It was built by the engineer Ibrahim Al-Mosili, who took into consideration the construction methods, the engineering aspects, and the extent of the influence of climatic and environmental factors on them, with the homogeneity of the artistic and decorative characteristics and their connection to the religious aspect, which made this beacon distinguished by its engineering and beautiful inscriptions that reflect Islamic architecture. And when the famous traveler Ibn Battuta visited the city of Mosul after its construction about two centuries ago, the minaret had tilted slightly.

schools in the 1930s were lowlily constructed. Nevertheless, that schools were chiming in with the pattern of the East in their city.

Maryia, the Orthodox Christian, felt bliss as she continued to reminisce her memories. Especially those related to the primary school, as she did not forget that school trip she went through to the historical city of Babylon when Maria was in the fifth grade of primary school which was accompanied by her dark-skinned Muslim friend, Zainab, brown-eyed black hair and sylph, tall stature, she belonged to the Yazidis. It was not just that, but also, she remembered how public transports were very rough in Mosul [(1)]; she and her peers rode in the wooden vehicle towards the school.

The headteacher of the school was in her 40s, short stature, heavyset, and brown-skinned. She was a Muslim lady and wore the Hijab. Her sonorous voice was a reason that pupils feared it. From when the pitter-patter of her foot was near as possible to the class, pupils became motionless with awe. Nonetheless, she was pretty active and a good role model for all pupils. Lo! She was always making sure that all pupils were more sanitary and had nail clipping. Her preceding reputation made Maria and her

(1) Mosul is a beautiful piece of the mosaic that includes various segments of society, including Christianity and Islam, and the Yazidis all live on one piece of land like brothers live in peace.

friends perceive the headteacher as their second mother. She remembered the incredible bounty of the school's headteacher when the last one taught her how to write the Arabic alphabet, especially the sixth letter of the Semitic abjads, Waw. Her teacher taught her how to draw Waw's letter upon the board, then the teacher wrote, "One," and said to the pupils, "*Indeed, Allah is the only One True God*.".

Furthermore, her incredible bounty upon Maryia when she taught her literacy; she was constantly repeating one of the traditions of the Messenger of Allah Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, Angel Gabriel asked him to recite. The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, replied, "*I do not know how to recite*.". After repeating three times, the Angel said,

﴿*Recite: In the Name of your Lord who created* ۝ *Created man from a clinging substance* ۝ *Recite, and your Lord is the Most Generous* ۝ *Who taught by the pen* ۝ *Taught man that which he knew not* ۝﴾(1). [Surat al-'Alaq: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5] (2).

(1) The Qur'an (English Meanings and Notes by Saheeh International), Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, Islamic Research Academy, General Department for Research, Writing & Translation.

(2) Al-'Alaq: The Clinging (or Suspended) Substance. The Surah has also been called *Iqra'*, meaning *recite* or *read*.

All of the preceding made Maria keen on literacy enough to write four pages if her teacher asked her to write only two pages. It indicated her keenness on the progress of learning. She did her best to fulfil her lifelong ambition; hence, she always looked out for number one during her study and did it successfully.

Maryia still let herself go to call to mind her magical childhood, especially her journey to the City of Babylon [1] that

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([1]) Babylon in Iraq is the cradle of the prophets, and it was the capital of the Babylonians during the reign of King Hammurabi, who taught people the law and the achievement of justice through his famous issue, which was stolen by colonialism and now placed in European museums! Babylon is the second empire and is called (Chaldean) after its founder Nebuchadnezzar al-Kaldi, who founded it in the year 627, and then took control of the rule of the Assyrians and was able to unite the tribes and control Babylon and the south, as he was able to bring down Nineveh their capital, and established in it a large empire characterized by urbanization. Arts and sciences and the revival of the Sumerian Acludian heritage.
The Aramaic language was the vernacular of the Babylonians, but the Akkadian language was the language adopted in the official offices. And Babylon means (the Gate of God), and it is (Sumer) the country of Mesopotamia, which is located south of Baghdad today, and the Persians call it (Babroush).
The Babylonian civilisation appeared in the eighteenth-century BC when Hammurabi built Babylon by defeating Assyria in 176 BC to issue his law and law at that time. Babylon went through periods when Marcellus, king of the Hittites, captured it. Four years later, the Assyrians seized it in the year 1240 BC, and King Nebuchadnezzar appeared as a king over Babylon, who also seized Jerusalem, which is called (Jerusalem), and captivated the Jews and brought them to Babylon, then he defeated the Phoenicians and built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.
The first to build its walls was King (Sumo), who called it (Khirat Enlil). The Babylonian civilisation is one of the greatest ancient civilisations that made significant achievements in astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and music.

King Hammurabi lived there. But a lot of the most critical Iraqi antiques were stolen by the colonisation. She often wondered, saying, "*What if the Iraqi antiques remained as they were?*" But soon, she replied herself, saying, "*Perhaps the terrorists destroyed it like everything else!*".

In Germany, where Maryia met Zainab, her best friend, near the museum, whenever she saw Ishtar Gate [(1)], she brought back memories of the journey to the antiques of Babylon. After that, Maryia, her teachers, and her schoolmates entered through Ishtar Gate, where a teacher started to explain the history of Ishtar Gate. Then, an ancient ring distracted Maryia and her schoolmates from their teacher; it took her attention, especially a strange gemstone upon the ring. Next, she put it in her pocket. It occurred to her that she would present it as a gift for her mother when she reached the house immediately. After several hours, it

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([1]) Ishtar Gate is the sixth gate to the city of Babylon, which was built by Nebuchadnezzar in the year five hundred and seventy-five BC in the north of the city as a gift of love to his wife. (And the original Ishtar Gate) was found by the Germans during the Uttoman era and taken to their country. They placed it in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, and it still exists today. The gate is designed in the form of (the flower goddess Ishtar), (and Ishtar), the mistress of the great gods whom they see as controlling human affairs. The gate is completely covered with blue alabaster, white marble and colored bricks, and is decorated with nearly six hundred animal figures, including the dragon. (And sirocs and bulls), and on its walls are murals representing the lion and the bull. It is considered one of the world's wonders like the Lighthouse of Alexandria, and a model of it was built during the era of President Saddam Hussein as an entrance to an unfinished museum.

was lunchtime; they had Mesopotamian Kibbeh, sweets, and jalebi [1].

Samirah was a history teacher in her 30s, with brown hair, brown-eyed, tiny nose, full lips. She was a Muslim lady and wore the Hijab. She dressed in her mourning attire because her spouse passed away in an accident. Samirah started to explain the history of Ziryab and some outlines of the history of Iraq. After she finished, Maryia got on the vehicle, overwhelmed with a great sense of joy because she held a gift for her mother and reminded her of coming back to her house, especially when she saw the city of Samarra [2] in March 1938. When coming back home, the headteacher of the school suggested visiting the shrines of Imam ‘Ali Al-Hadi and Imam Al-Hasan Al-‘ Askari.

While coming back to the house, Maryia fondly searched for the ring that she put in her pocket, which has led her friend, Zainab, to ask her what she was disturbing. Maryia replied that there was nothing, and she assured her that everything was all right; just the journey already amused her, for she had never seen

(1) It is a kind of sweets named after the well-known musician Ziryab, a musician, poet, and scientist who appeared in the Abbasid era between the years 789 and 857 AH.

(2) Samarra is a city located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River in central Iraq, belonging to Salah al-Din Governorate, 125 km from the Iraqi capital, Baghdad. It is one of the holy cities of the Shiite sect, but the majority of its residents are from the Sunni sect.

these places before. Maryia was a Christian girl, but she was very keen to keep her shoes away from the Muslim sacred sites. She treated the Muslim shrines with great respect.

The headteacher's habit was to repeat the students' names to ensure they were not absent if Maryia came down with them to the shrines. The headteacher had her eye on all students till they got on the vehicle. The driver of the car was a middle-aged man with a black and white beard, wearing an old white scarf as well as an old white dishdasha. While they began singing, saying, "*This is our handsome driver, who would drive us to our houses, then he would return*.", a cow suddenly stopped in front of the vehicle; it almost killed all of them. Lo! It was the favour of Allah that saved them. Maryia remembered screeching the driver, saying, "*I thank you, O my Lord*.".

The vehicle headed towards the north. And when the driver went near the plateau, the headteacher asked him to stop near an old building. It sounded like the palace of one of the ancient rulers. She said, "*Now we reached the palace of Al-'Ashiq* (1).".

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(1) Al-Ashiq Palace is located nine kilometers on the western side of the city of Samarra. The Abbasid Caliph Al-Mu'tamid Billah built it. It consists of two floors. It comes in a rectangular shape and is surrounded by an expansive walled yard, and around the wall is a trench. Much of it was eroded at its construction, which was in the year 870 AD. It is also called (The Palace of the Lover and the Beloved), and the story of this name goes back to the fact that Prince Al-

She took advantage of the magnificence and oddity of the place. Then, she started to play and had fun with her friends. The air was caressing the tufts of her hair. While immersed in play, she went down to one of the lower floors of the palace out of curiosity to feel something strange! It was as if she saw in it a treasure of gold! Then she turned back, and the image of her feeling did not leave her mind. She often wandered in her thoughts, asking, "*Could it be a treasure belonging to the one who built the palace?*" Her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of the headteacher; the headteacher called everyone to get on the bus. It was a wonderful fresh spring breeze. Moreover, the clouds in the air made a feeling that her face was drawn in that joyful sky.

She contemplated the beautiful sky at sunset from the bus window with her sleeping friend Zainab next to her. She used the moment to see the ring that she took out of her pocket until she fell asleep, to wake up upon arrival. When she knocked on the door of her house, her father welcomed her teacher and her, and he had gone out to them wearing an Arab dishdasha and a kaffiyeh on his head and invited the teacher to enter; she thanked him and left. Then listen lovingly to Maryia as she recounts her

Mu'tamid had fallen in love with an Abbasid princess whose house was west of Samarra. He was given this name.

school trip. Because he was a former soldier, he was powerful, but he was also kind, humble, beautiful, broad-shouldered, slightly whitish, wide-eyed, black hair, black eyes, and a strong voice. Out of her love for him, she resorted to him at all times, so he would initiate her with his tenderness and kindness, tell her stories, and give her gifts.

Her family's house was tiny, but it was full of happiness, as it contained two rooms, an oriental bathroom, a small courtyard, and a tiny sitting room. Her room consisted of a modest bed, an iron wardrobe, a small rug, and an iron fireplace, and in the room, there was a window overlooking the hall of the house.

Then Maryia took the ring and put her fingers on it, and brought it to her mother, who was beautiful, white, with colourful eyes, fair skin, fine hair, graceful in stature, of medium size, with a beautiful voice, and so she sometimes sang them some savages. She hugged her mother, and they talked together in the presence of her father. They talked about the details of the journey in which she saw the great legacy of her ancestors in the glorious land of civilisations of Iraq. Then she gave a ring to her mother, and then her father asked to see that strange ring! And he began to contemplate it and was astonished by the gemstone upon it, which led him to think about the goldsmith Youssef Al-

Sabi'i about the secret of that gemstone! He was close to them because they lived in Mahal at Hush Khan [1], most of whose residents were from the Christian sect, specifically the Syriac. At that time, her mother was afraid of keeping it because of her mental image that was formed in her childhood through the story of the ominous necklace that Harun Al-Rashid gave his wife Zubaidah, which resulted in great misfortune that she did not want to tell her details to Maryia at that time.

When her father took the ring to the goldsmith, she imagined the areas she lives and the entire State. As if the entire history of her family had been written on it. Then she let herself go to call to mind the story her mother had told her when she was little, the scary story of the necklace [2].

([1]) The houses in (Housh Khan's locality) were tiny, and they contained medium-sized shops, and there were several churches in it, the most famous of which are (Marios Joseph and Old Tahira). Its landmarks include the Sheikh Abdullah Khan Masjid, Maryam Khatun Masjid, the Sagha market, Bab Al-Saray market, and a section of Al-Nujaifi Street. Ghazi Street, Khalid Bin Al-Waleed Al-Mufti Street, Al-Saffarin Market, and the old bathrooms were found in the markets, and in the past, there was one short bridge called the Mosul Bridge, and in the year 1934, the Iron Bridge was opened, and it was surrounded by a wall in the past, near a castle called the Castle (Ashtabya).

([2]) The ominous necklace is called (Marduk's necklace), and it is a very precious necklace studded with precious stones, made three thousand years ago, on which was written a group of strange talismans and inscriptions believed to have belonged to one of the priests (the Temple of Marduk). The king of the Romans gave him to the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid with many jewellery, who in turn gave them to his spouse Zubaydah, and she never wore them! The Caliph Al-Amin, who liked it a lot and wore it for a while, got it, and at this point, the curse began! He was killed by Taher bin Al-Hussein, who seized Al-Amin's

The Sabaeans were distinguished by their knowledge of deciphering talismans of precious stones, and after he greeted him, he sat on a chair in the narrow goldsmith's shop. During his work, he began to engage in conversation with him and assured him that the reasons for his long absence from him were because he worked in the army and spent long periods in the camps that increased during the Second World War, which then made them focus on storing supplies and food in case of any emergency!

The goldsmith explained to him that the high gold prices contributed to the shortage of his customers, then he continued to check the ring that he was trying to decipher his talismans, and then he said to him: "*It is written upon it from the side of the seal of an ancient state, it may be the seal of the Sumerian or Assyrian state, and on the other side letters were written upon is unknown*." Then he asked him to keep it with him to search in the book on decoding the talismans for the solution, so he agreed to his request immediately, bid farewell to him, and proceeded to his business.

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property in which the necklace was included and wore it, and several days did not pass until Tahir bin Al-Hussein was killed. It was kept in the treasury of al-Mu'tasim, who perished at the hands of Hulagu, his family. Hulagu obtained the contract and gifted it to his mistress (Vansa), married one of his army commanders. And as soon as she put on the necklace, her spouse learnt about her relationship with Hulagu and killed her immediately. Then the commander took the necklace and was killed in Ain Jalut led by Q. Taz, the battle he won Muslims, and after a while, Sultan Qutuz was assassinated!

On his way home, he passed the church, then he performed his prayer and lit candles as well as he heard the hymns they were reciting to the soul of a dead person. And when he came to the house of his mother-in-law, he kissed the head of his mother-in-law. She dressed in black and had a white scarf on her head that resembled the skin of her face. Her eyes were blue, a little faded by the woes of life. She asked him how he and his family were; he replied that they were all fine. Then she told him that she had backache, so he told her about a Muslim friend of his, who was willing to restrain her to get rid of the backache and promised her to return to her to take her to him for cupping. He also promised to bring her a lot of essential goods soon. And when he returned to his home, and after his family welcomed him, he told them about his passing through his wife's family and his reassurance about them and announced to them that they would know the bottom of the ring's secret soon.

On the same night, Maryia dreamed of the Virgin Mary, and she gave her the same ring that she had found! Then she left, immediately Maryia panicked, but she realised that it was just a dream. After her mother saw Maryia's face, one of fear, her mother hugged her; then Maryia told her about what she had dreamed. So, she laughed and said to her: "*This is a great tiding*," and promised her to visit Umm Tariq, the dream

interpreter, as soon as possible to clarify that vision. The weather then was beautiful in March, when her father usually went to work in the morning, while her mother brought lunch, took care of the house, drank coffee, and read some books.

And when she remembered her daughter’s dream, she left her coffee, put on her clothes, and went to the house of the dream interpreter, Umm Tariq, who welcomed her, and showed her longing for her after a long separation. Then she told her about her daughter Maryia’s dream. Umm Tariq did tell her that Maryia might find good luck and abundant sustenance and might be the owner of a business in the future for her or her spouse, or God may grant her to give birth to a son or get a beautiful home. Maryia’s mother was highly pleased with these beautiful tidings, and in her heart, and was overjoyed. And then she extended the hospitality, which consisted of black tea and some cakes and jalebi which she had made in the tandoor; it was made of pottery (beef bread, which is made of flour, minced meat and onions, in addition to chopped greens are mixed and baked in the form of tablets). After a short time, I asked her permission to go back to her house. Shortly after her arrival, Maryia entered; who initiated her direct question about the interpretation of the dream? And when she gave her good tidings of it, she flew with joy.

On his way back from work, her father passed by the goldsmith and took the ring he had written from him: "*Good Luck Ring*." And when he reached the house, Maryia embraced him, rejoicing in the tiding; furthermore, waiting for the truth of the ring's secret. And after they sat down, he told her that the ring had drawings from the Assyrian or Sumerian era, and the meanings of the talismans written upon it were the fortune of happiness for those who carried it. After these words and omens, Maryia was over the moon. She kissed her parents in a childlike craving and overjoyed, and then her mother told her that the ring reminded her of the largest diamond room found by Hindu rulers in India in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-seven [(1)], and it was sold for a British merchant, it weighed one

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([1]) India is characterised by precious stones, as its rulers were distinguished and competed to possess them, and the greatness of the king at that time was measured by the jewellery he owned, and sometimes the leaders presented them to the kings or obtained them in the form of booty. It is said that this diamond is full of legends, as it is believed that the god of the sun was the one who gave it as a gift to the earth (and Koh-i-Noor) means (the Great Mughal), which is the name of the diamond and it is priceless.

Its true history began in 1523 when it was acquired by the ruler of the throne of New Delhi, which ended at the hands of the Mughals due to the betrayal of his men because of his cruelty to them. And the Mongols occupied and burned Baghdad but destroyed everything in it, and even books! Then the diamond was transferred to (Shah Shuja), who sent his wife and the diamond with her to (Maharaja Singh) in Lahore, and Wafa arrived. And (the Kohinoor) remained with him for twenty years until he donated it to the temple (Jagannath). In 1849 it was handed over to the British under an agreement and treaty after the British war against the Sikhs. Then (Lawrence) received the diamond and put it in his pocket and forgot it, then the maid found it and gave him the diamond, and sent

hundred and five carats, which is equivalent to twenty-one grams and six-centigramme.

Maryia's mother, Rita, was talking about gemstones, which she said to have extraordinary energies, as each of our astrological signs has a stone that matches it. Some bring good luck, and some bring jinx so that her spouse commented to her that he wishes it brings a good fortune ring, goodness, optimism, and hope. Then they had lunch, which is (Pacha) [1], and during lunch, Rita reminded her spouse of the beginnings of their marriage when she learnt it from her mother-in-law, to assure her that she had become better prepared *as if the student had surpassed the teacher*, he said in a grin. It was a beautiful springtime, and when it began to rain, Maryia opened her window and started to catch the raindrops with her pretty little palms. At the rain's end, her father woke up and asked her mother to make tea with cardamom and some cheese pies. They all sat in the wet and fragrant yard of the house.

Everything was beautiful and refreshed with life at that time, even the trees became shining in colour, and roses and

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it back to England in 1850 and handed over to (Queen Victoria) after that, then they put her in the British Royal Crown in a locker in the Tower of London until now.

([1]) Pacha is a dish of boiled cow or sheep parts, which might include the head, feet, and stomach.

jasmine gave off their fragrant and pungent aromas. Maryia put the teapot on the samovar; it was an old machine used to keep tea hot, and then she put pancakes with a bit of mint and olives, and they began to engage in conversation. While they were talking, the door was knocked, and after her father opened the door, he hugged his brother Ayoub, who greeted her mother and her, and told her that she had grown up, which made her show her pleasure.

The father of Maryia sat with Ayoub, engaged in conversation, then Ayoub told him that he intended to sell his house. Her father was astonished by him, who, when he asked him about the reason, Ayoub replied that he had had a new deed of a piece of property from the department of the Karrada of Mary area. It was estimated that at three thousand square meters, they were inheritors. Only then, the father of Maryia muttered and said to himself: "*This is the first glad tidings of the Ring*." Then Ayoub suggested that Maryia's father takes his business to Baghdad to be adjacent to him. But the father of Maryia replied that he was thinking about the matter, and he began to flirt in the city of Mosul, which he loves.

After they had finished speaking about the matter, the mother of Maryia came with a glass of juice and put it on the table. Then she sat next to her spouse, who had announced the

news to her, and revealed to her the great inheritance that they had not considered, and then whispered in his ear that the discussion would take place later on the subject because she remembered that if It is done, she moves away from her mother, her sister, and the city in which she lived and grew up! Although they insisted that the uncle of Maryia stays until they all have a dinner or overnight, as is the custom of the Iraqis people hospitality, but he refused that on the pretext that his friend had summoned him before them for dinner and overnight, so he went to him and brought gifts to his friend.

After he was gone, the mother of Maryia remained sitting in her place with a grin on her face, and she was happy to say that the jeweller's words about the secrets of the ring were actual, and she emphasised keeping it as a magic lantern in fairy tales, which is the key to luck and sustenance. Her spouse agreed to keep it with their wedding jewellery, a suggestion that reminded them of the beginnings of their married life, which made them smile at sunset. Then the mother inspected her daughter Maryia's school matters.

The following day, her mother got up and made breakfast, which was boiled eggs with hot bread she had brought from the stone oven near their house, and with tea, everyone had breakfast. Maryia went to school and said, "*Hullo!*" to her

classmates: Fatimah, ‘Ayishah, Lamis, and Maryam, although she had fun with them. She was a little calm and excelled in all subjects over them. The school was targeted to students of all religions, and the class of religion was neatly distributed among Christians and Muslims to receive their religion with classmates from other classes and memorise the Qur’an and the Prophetic Traditions; Hadiths. As for the Christians, she was taught by a nun. She wore a unique dress consisting of a black and white piece of cloth on the head and a white dress.

That nun was distinguished, as Maryia said, who learnt from her all the rituals and teachings of the Bible, which calls for peace, and her friend ‘Ayishah told her about the religion of Islam, the religion of mercy, peace, tolerance, and co-operation. Maryia said that she had admired the Islamic religion very much and confirmed that, had it not been for the traditions and customs of Christians, she would have left her religion and would convert to Islam, where she thought about all religions and believed them complementing each other. She remembered being born into a Christian family. Her family had baptised her at the church that gave her her name. She grew up in her childhood, going every Sunday with her family to mass. She learnt how to play the hymns of the Virgin Mary on the piano, light candles. So about that, she felt to fly like a butterfly in the space of fantasies. But

her friend alerted her to the immediate start of the lesson, which made her regain consciousness.

She was with her friends, imitating the method of teachers, while they were giving lessons, and one of her friends mastered that imitating, and they met her with hoarse laughter that made the headteacher pays attention to them and threaten them with punishment. Because Maryia does not know how to lie, she admitted to the headteacher that one of the students imitated her, and her confession was after the headteacher promised her that she would not harm her. She suffered a lot for the sake of her friend, who was abused by the headteacher and scolded her. But she apologised to her after that. It made her aware of her responsibility for all decisions in her life that she makes next. And because her conscience is alive, she was not satisfied with apologising, as sadness appeared upon her face when she returned home, which made her mother ask her, "*why are you crying and what is the secret of your sadness?*" Which made her tell her what happened, then she was relieved that she only told the truth and that the matter ended with her noble apology. Then she invited her to share her ideas in planning her tenth birthday, which falls on the fourth day of the fourth month, the Second Rabi'. They agreed to prepare a cake with dates and pistachios, berry juice, candles, and conductive songs.

On her birthday, she never forgets her mother's surprise when she presented her a special gift of a gold piece with her name written upon it that remains a memory for her and her children later. And when Maryia went to school, she brought the cake that she celebrated with her friends for attending the hen party [(1)].

([1]) The Hen Party is a tradition that takes place a day before the wedding, where Al-Faw Hen is combined with the Myrtus communis, and seven white sheets of material are placed in a bowl, and all of them are placed in a bowl called the *Table*, and then lavender water, cardamom, and sugar are called in Iraqi slang (Shukr Kala). It is raw sugar that has not yet been made, then the cardamom is placed between the fingers of the bride, and then the henna is worked on her hands and feet through the nearest woman from the bride. Then the chants and joy begin, and henna is administered to each of the women, and a little henna is placed on the hands of the invited, then two lucky women put a piece of cloth on the bride's head, and they dance and sing. It is a tradition that the family of the bride give a lunch to the people of the neighbourhood on the day after the henna, and the neighbours co-operate with them in that. After the henna party is over, the groom goes to the market bath with his closest friends, goes to the barber, and smears one of his fingers with henna. It is customary for the bride to have a room in her spouse's family's house, and she stays with them until the birth of her third child, and then when they have a good economic possibility, they move to a separate house. And the bathroom that the groom goes to is among the old bathrooms, including (Hammam "Bathroom" of 'Ubaid Agha), which is similar to the baths of Levant and Turkey, in which the washer is called (the Dallak), which the groom gives him a simple gift called (the baksheesh). Before the wedding, each of the newlyweds buys gifts for the other, and it is called (the suspender or the device), and it includes everything from clothes and household items, which are transported on horse-drawn carts and pass through the alleys between the houses, and every alley they pass through is sprinkled with roses and water by its people. After the groom puts on the new robe, they take him to his house with chants and drums, chanting some chants, some of which belong to Turkish culture, which they say in the Mosuli dialect, such as: "*There is a man he loved a woman and he was sent to be engaged to him, the family of the bride agreed to marry him to her*". A drink of Cinnamon is provided to attendees.

It was an unforgettable night that Maryia lived while playing with her friends in the yard of the wedding house. After a pleasant and joyful time, they returned to the house, which when they entered it, Maryia and her mother walked on tiptoe so as not to wake their father, who asked them why they were late the next day. Her mother replied that the country was safe and that the party was fun. And that day was a Friday, which made Maryia's mother make them food *Dolma* (1).

But during that, she felt a high temperature in her body and severe cold, which made her resort to gargling with water, salt, and herbal tea. She ate the chicken soup with vegetables and remained on that for three days until the symptoms disappeared completely. At that time, antibiotics were not available, making everyone resort to the pharmacy of nature, and their bodies were more resistant to diseases. The months went well until it was time for Maryia's exams, which she was preparing well for it. She revised all her courses, read all the books to get the final grade in all the courses, and got the hot spot. Her mother always remembered the ring during her successes. But she was confused about the secret of Maryia's superiority; it lay either in her diligence or in the magic ring!

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(1) Dolma is stuffed grape leaves made of boiled peas and is called (Shrike Bakla) in the vernacular, eaten in cold weather.

She remembered when her father promised her a visit to her uncle's house on holiday in Baghdad, which made her have a great sense of joy, as she is very eager to visit her cousins. They all set off towards Baghdad a long way back then because of the poor capabilities of cars, unlike today. They were carrying some gifts with them, such as Mosul sweets and some household items, and upon their arrival, their uncle welcomed them very much, and his sons welcomed Maryia, one of whom was five years older than her, and the other one year older than her. The hospitality of Baghdad's people at the time that the summons of its people continues to the guest. So, the guest has lunch or dinner daily in the house of one of the families. And her uncle's spouse was a beautiful lady, so they called her Cinderella when she walked on earth as if she was the princess of kings. She was also very educated, as she mastered several languages, namely French, English and Arabic; she graduated from *Madame Adel National School*. The sons of the uncle's spouse gathered in a room, and then they left the rest of the rooms to Maryia and her family. The family of Maryia spent a month with them because of her father's preoccupation with the issue of the land he inherited from his father. He sold one-third of his land at a reasonable price. After that, he started to build the rest of it with

his brother’s help, who left him to follow up the construction in his absence during his return to Mosul.

After returning from Baghdad, the schools began, so Maryia wore her father’s gifts, which he gave her, and flaunted her bag and clothes in front of her classmates, who hugged them a lot with joy and longing for them.

After the flag was raised, the headteacher delivered a speech at the beginning of the year, which included much praise for the students, and explained to them the importance of adhering to the uniform, personal hygiene, not growing nails, preventing nail polish, adhering to the school hours, not leaving or escaping before the end of school time, and following up on duties of school from the first day. Then the teachers have distributed classroom guidance to each class, a teacher responsible for her students and their problems. She was a great head and a mother to everyone.

After everyone went to their class, Maryia sat on her chair in the first grade to be in the closest place to the teacher, and after distributing the books, she got her share of her books of the last stage of primary school. The teacher, Balqis, began to get to know them and their names, and a dialogue took place between them about the holiday and where they had gone to it. And when it was her turn, Maryia spoke passionately about her vacation,

which she enjoyed a lot. When Maryia returned home, her mother was blissful with her books, hugged her, wrapped the books with her, and then prepared for lunch, which consisted of grilled fish and hot bread called *Masgouf* [(1)]. After that, she slept to be woken by her mother at sunset to sit with her parents in the regular evening session of family, in which many distinguished family conversations take place.

The days passed, and winter came again with its cold nights and rainy days, and they prepared for Christmas by drawing on eggs, decorating the Christmas tree, and her mother began to sew a Santa Claus costume with his white chin from cotton, and his red dress carrying a bag full of presents such as children's toys, sweets, and money. And then, he distributed them to the children of Mahallah. Then they visited the church and attended mass, and each of them kissed and shook hands with relatives in a beautiful festive scene in which everyone put on new clothes and lit candles. Afterwards, they prepared for the celebration of New Year to go with her mother to the Lagash bath [(2)].

([1]) Masgouf is is a fish river-style of the rivers of our beloved Iraq is grilled in such a way that the fish is suspended at a distance of fifteen centimetres from the fire, and is grilled in a very slow way.

([2]) Lagash Bath: it was the first bathroom in Mosul, and on days of the week it was open for men and other days for women. There were also volcanic water baths called Hammam al-Alil, and its water was considered a cure for patients

Although life was simple, love was spread in the hearts, and social solidarity showed solidarity among everyone. There was no separation between religions and sects at that time, as society's people mutually supported each other. They took sweets and went to their grandmother and aunt's house to celebrate the New Year with them. Her mother kissed on the top of her grandmother, showed them tolerance, assured them of her complete satisfaction with them, and bequeathed her home to them in front of everybody, and her mother asked Allah, Almighty, to grant her grandmother good health.

After they returned to their home at sunset, one of their neighbours came to them and told them about their grandmother's fatigue at midnight. They panicked and ran in dismay, and upon arrival, they found their aunt drowning in her tears because her mother had passed away! Hasten to wash her and carry her with the neighbours to the church. Then they went to take a last look at her before burying her. From the severity of her shock, her aunt told her mother that she did not want anything from her mother's inheritance and said she would go to the monastery to become a nun. She said that and did as she vowed herself to serve her religion, her motto in that: chastity

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with joint and bone pain.

and poverty. As for her mother, she sold her mother's house and donated some of the money to the poor as a charity, and the other part of which she bought land in Mosul in a commercial place that portends a beautiful future.

Her mother vowed to visit her grandmother, who went to church every Sunday to pray for her. It was a sad year for her when her mother lost her. Then the days passed, their uncle sent to them a message informing them of the completion of the construction of their house in Baghdad, and asking them to move to live there, which made her father inquire about his workplace how he would move to Mosul, and this was done quickly when his administrator answered him with immediate approval. He was wearing the military suit that made him prestigious, and he was a colonel at the time. And he was brown with thick moustaches and a large nose, and he was tall, vast, and muscular. At that point, her father was delighted during returning to the house, so that they all proceeded to the complete preparation for travelling, which included preparing a large car that would carry them with their belongings to their new home in the other city.

And upon their departure, the moments of farewell were present in a complicated feeling, as they said with tears their grandmother's grave, and bid farewell to their aunt, friends, neighbours, and many of their beautiful memories. They

authorised their neighbour to take care of their house and assigned him the responsibility of renting it to the residents, as he rented it to one of his relatives.

Moving to Baghdad meant moving bodies and culture, as Baghdad is the capital, and therefore it is much larger than their previous city, Nineveh, which is the most populous and the most civilised in terms of institutions, schools, hospitals, and other government agencies.

After settling in their new house, Maryia completed her secondary education and learnt English and French. The conditions in the school were different in terms of uniform and long hours, which included lunch and music lessons. The living conditions were different. Most of the school's students were girls from the highest strata of society before the revolution of Rashid 'Ali al-Jailani [(1)].

([1]) This revolution took place with a coup against the regent Abd al-Ilah, as the regime in that era was a regime Royal, which was carried out by the Free Revolutionaries Four Officers with Rashid 'Ali Al-Jailani, and if not for the English's support for the regent at the time ended the monarchy, but the coup failed, but it was weaker the rule, where King Faisal II at the time was very young. That revolution took place in February of the year 1949 and resulted in the overthrow of the regent 'Abd al-Ilah from the throne, and a new government was formed, called in the colloquial dialect (Deckkahat Rashid 'Ali).
This revolution contributed to inflaming the patriotic spirit of the people, which contributed to the 1950 revolution which was led by the organization of patriotic officers against the British tide. Biased with Britain at a time when the people were suffering from the scourge of the wounds of World War II. Where Iraq was in need at that time to heal its wounds, and to rebuild the infrastructure

Maryia's mother loved reading and writing, and she kept doing that until she collected a complete material that her spouse turned into a book and presented to her on their tenth wedding anniversary; its title was "*Ahla Layali al-'Umr*" [1]. Maryia was accompanying her parents every Friday to go to al-Mutanabbi

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destroyed by the war, in addition to the repercussions of British colonialism and the revolution
Twenty. And because Nuri Said was prime minister in that era, he wanted to impose his political project after settling his political problems with his opponents.
On the other hand, Lieutenant-General Hussein Fawzi, Chief of the General Staff, was leading opposition currents
Because of the policy of Prime Minister Nuri Saeed, and therefore Fawzi allied himself with many army leaders, in addition to some national parties and personalities led by Rashid 'Ali al-Jailani Pasha, who was head of the Royal Court and with him some nationalist currents aspiring to separate Iraq from the British occupation, which rejected the policy of Nuri Said subject to the British occupation.
Then armed conflict erupted between the two currents, which led to the resignation of Nuri Said and Rashid Pasha as prime minister in his place after Britain intervened to support Nuri Said. And when 'Abdullah left the throne and fled abroad with Nuri Said, Britain realised that Iraq had deviated from its will, so it sought the return of Nuri Said and the regent to power and waged a war against Rashid Pasha to overthrow his government that led to the occupation of Iraq by her, to the failure of the March Revolution of 1941, and accordingly, the British government arrested the four colonels: Mahmoud Fahmi Said, Salah al-Din al-Sabbagh, Kamel Shabib, and Mahmoud Salman. Rashid 'Ali Al-Jailani fled to Saudi Arabia as a refugee.
Black nights and instability passed, especially in the capital, Baghdad, and Britain succeeded in restoring him to power, but he was under its own will and orders! It was true that stability has returned to Iraq, but it was stability without sovereignty!
([1]) English translation: The Best Nights of Life.

Street [1] in the direction of Rusafa of Baghdad to buy books and drink coffee in the old heritage Café of Shah Bandar [2].

Maryia remembered the Saray market of Mosul in the centre of the old city, where it was the oldest and largest market. When she visited it, she saw its distinctiveness with its narrow, winding alleys, and each alley in which was specialised for a

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(1) Al-Mutanabbi Street was in the centre of the capital, Baghdad, near Al-Rasheed Square and Street, where the trade of books of all kinds flourished, and sales were active every Friday, frequented by intellectuals for shopping and learning. The street also contains the oldest printing press and a number of old libraries that contain rare manuscripts. It also contains old buildings, including the buildings of the civil courts, which were called Qishla in Turkish. And there is the Al-Muwfaqiyah School built by Muwaffaq Al-Khadem, which is the location of the Tabu Directorate in the royal era, opposite the cultural centre overlooking the Tigris River, which contains a large number of halls for poetry, literary and cultural seminars. wood and heritage. At the end of Al-Mutanabbi Street, there is Al-Saray Market, which is famous for selling notebooks, papers and school books. Despite its very short distance, which does not exceed three hundred meters, the libraries were crowded in abundance. It is one of the oldest markets in Baghdad, where its construction coincided with the construction of the mosque of Minister Hasan Pasha, son of Minister Muhammad Pasha in 1960.
Next to it, there is also the Sarajeen market, which was frequented by auditors of government departments, such as the Baghdad Brigade banking building, which was opposite Al-Qishla, the seat of the Iraqi government at the time.
Al-Mutanabbi Street was given this name during the reign of King Faisal in 1932, after the poet of wisdom and courage, Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi. There are hundreds of old photographs of the most prominent ancient political figures in Souq Al-Saray, as well as a large number of old libraries, such as the Renaissance and Knowledge Library, and a number of books by writers of the 1940s such as Dr Jawad ʻAli and Nuri Jaafar.

(2) At the entrance to the Saray Market, which was divided into three sections, there was a bakery in the era of the ʻUttoman Empire called Akmakkhanah, opposite the *Shah Bandar* café where Kibbeh Al Saray was sold, which is one of the most delicious Iraqi dishes and is prepared from minced meat.

specific profession or craft such as safes, blacksmiths, carpenters, saddlers, plumbers, perfume vendors, the money-changers, rope makers, coal miners, coffee makers, and drapers. When she lived in Baghdad, she and her family visited the *Shorja* and *Ghazal* markets [1]. So, she asked her father about this heritage, as he told her that son of Hulagu Khan was the one who built the minaret of the Caliphs Masjid in the thirteenth century AD.

Her father and mother disagreed about the origin of the name *Shorja Market* [2]. Her father said that the name came as

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([1]) The Ghazal Market is characterised by the Caliph Mosque minaret, which is the oldest surviving minaret in Baghdad. The market is also distinguished by its small shops selling dry grains, legumes and herbs, and other shops selling domestic and wild birds such as falcons and peacocks, in addition to rare dogs and ornamental fish. On the grounds of the market stands the Caliph Masjid, whose minaret fell and was renovated by Governor Suleiman Pasha I in 1802. Al-Shorja market was built in the Abbasid era, as its location extends to the Murjan Masjid on Al-Rasheed Street, and it is called today the Rihanin Market. The name Shorja comes from Persian شورچاه *Shurchah* and means *Salty Well.*

([2]) In the Shourja market there are Hammam al-Shorja, Souk al-Tamarah and al-Attarin, and Khan Stock. Al-Khan: It is the hotel where travellers from outside Baghdad spend their rest time until they go shopping from the market. Likewise, most Baghdadis used to buy from this market during Ramadan, holidays and occasions, and buy candles, spices, and wedding and wedding supplies from it. Next to it was the Soap Market and the Khans Market, where there were thirteen inns, which is the hotel, including Khan Lalla al-Saghir, and Khan Jini Murad. The reason for this name was that one day the khan was burned and another building appeared behind the building that burned so that people would then believe that there was a kingdom of the Jinn that had built the khan. In addition to Khan Al-Amin and Khan Al-Agha.
In the same area, there are several cafés, such as Al-Ma'ala and Qaddouri Cafés, which is frequented by artists and Maqam readers such as Abd al-Razzaq al-

mentioned in the initial margin. But her mother said that the name came from the *Shabraj*, which means *Sesame Oil*; as it was in the past in the market, there were contemporary *Sesame Seeds*, and it was distorted over time from *Shabraja* to *Shorja*.

Maryia learnt the repoussage art from her teacher, who taught it to her. She made a copperplate; her mother hung in the house and bragged to the guests because of its beauty. Maryia was asking her mother about the history of Iraq because her mother used to read a lot.

Maryia loved her school, and she adored the Baghdadi cloak and the houses in Baghdad, especially those characterised by a unique style of Mashrabyiah(s). She felt beautiful in studying music associated with the Abbasid era, as she was delighted as she bent her fingers on the musical strings. The sports and musical, and ballet segments were among the school's

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Qubanji and Muhammad al-Qubanji. And because the Shorja market area is rich in Masjids, markets and inns, it was as if he visited all of Baghdad, and the market was exposed to a fire in the year 1912, and it lasted for seven days until it was extinguished with material losses only. There was also the Copper Market, which was established in the Abbasid era close to Bab Al-Agha on Al-Rasheed Street near Souk al-Shorja, and opposite Khan Murjan, where most of the old household utensils were made of copper, and picture frames and lanterns were all also of copper.

The locality of Souk al-Shorja and its neighbouring markets was known in the past as the Tuesday, which is close to the House of the Abbasid Caliphate. Al-Mahalla contains the al-Saffarin Masjid, a small masjid built during the time of the ‘Uttoman Empire.

activities, which fascinated Maryia and saw them as if they were flying butterflies while dancing. She was thrilled when she was in high school, and she donated to the flood victims of the Tigris River in 1954.

Then she remembered her cousins Hani and Nail. Hani was five years older than her. He was a handsome, graceful, muscular lad and had completed secondary school before her and obtained a high degree. Hani was among the first in Iraq, which qualified him to obtain a medical scholarship to London. And because he was taciturn, he circulated written messages and sent them from London to his family in Iraq and continued to do so until he completed his bachelor's degree and obtained an honours degree from the University of Cambridge. He sent his father and uncle his graduation photographs, in which they looked exquisite in the well-known graduation dress in black and striped with red, and the well-known hat that he was throwing at me out of his happiness. Whenever he visited them on his annual leave, he would tell them about life in Britain and Cambridge (1) in particular.

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(1) It is considered the first university in Britain and in the world, as it was built in the year 1200 AD, and Newton and other well-known scholars of the world had graduated from it. It contained 600-year-old classrooms, and also had a prayer room for Muslims.
The University of Cambridge was located on the bank of the Cam River that passes through it, or in relation to the city of Cambridge. The university was

Hani was writing to his mother about his suffering with alienation; he used to cook, wash and do all the housework. Once, he had a fever that he would have died because of it had it not been for his Muslim friend Saleh, who was living with him in the university dormitory, and who helped him and took him to the hospital, which made him stick to him and see in him the loyal and noble friend. They studied together with the language and all the three-year bachelor’s degree, during which Hani got to know some British friends, and he was fascinated by British laws, which he hoped would be implemented in his country, Iraq.

Hani also got acquainted with the family of his girlfriend Helen. She was a Christian from the Orthodox sect. Hani used to go to them on all occasions in Arab clothes, even on Halloween. It led the attendance to marvel at his clothes. And they took photographs with him. His relationship with his girlfriend, Helen, developed, and they exchanged gifts such as red bears and love hearts until he began talking to his mother about her, and he wrote to her once that she was the one who

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named by that name, and it includes a large number of students from different countries of the world, and it has many landmarks such as the Fitzwilliam Museum, which contains many ancient coins, antiquities and paintings. It also has a botanical garden that contains more than 8000 species studied by university students, and in the city is also The Backs, a scenic area located on both sides of the Cam River.

helped him in his studies and that he saw in her eyes a spark of life and hope. This intense love contributed to his mother going to London to complete the marriage ceremony, which took place quickly. He decided to stay with her in London and practise his work in heart surgery there.

He was walking with his mother in Cambridge; then he went to places he had previously passed with his beloved, Helen. Moreover, he was thrilled near his mother. Whenever he looked at his spouse, Helen, he remembered the first meeting when her books and papers fell from her at the university, so he bent down to help her gather her things. Also, Hani remembered the soup he used to make for her when she got sick. Furthermore, covering her using his clothes, fearing rain while he was passing with her near the river, and she, too, put her hat on his head. He smiled a lot as he remembered those moments, and thank God that it was crowned with a beautiful marriage. Helen was a beautiful blonde with Scottish features and only her family; her mother was a teacher, and her father was a bank employee.

The mother of Hani returned to Baghdad with some simple gifts. She gave Maryia a coat, a purse to her mother, some clothes to Nail, and a luxurious black suit to her spouse. Then everyone sat contemplating photographs of a Hani's marriage.

Concerning Nail has learnt at the Secondary School of al-Adhamiyah [1] and has learnt the Faculty of Engineering, Petroleum, at Baghdad College, and he did not know that his country, Iraq, would become among the essential oil-exporting countries at that time.

Maryia completed her studies at secondary school and entered the Faculty of Engineering because she loved Islamic-style buildings, as she loved archaeology and civilisation in 1957. During her studies, she got acquainted with a young man named ‘Adel, who was studying at the Faculty of Law, so she formed a friendship with him, and formed several friends at the university, “Salma from Nasiriyah,” “Maral” a Jewish girl, “Catherine” a Christian girl, and “Nabihah” a Sunni Muslim girl.

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(1) The School of al-Adhamiyah is one of the oldest schools in Baghdad, which was established in 1931 in al-Adhamiyah on the Tigris River on the Eastern bank. It included the finest educational curricula established by the American Jesuits. Therefore, most of her students were Christians, Jews, and the royal family. Then the Muslims have learnt in it, who became half of it. Its site included nine buildings, consisting of a boarding school, laboratories, a library, a large courtyard, and dense trees surrounding the school wall; a tall main gate stood. Before it was built, Baghdad’s velvet families sent their sons to Victoria College in Alexandria, Egypt. The school had a uniform for students, which consisted of a white shirt, a blue jacket and grey pants. As for the teaching staff, he was dressed in the white monks’ uniform. Science and mathematics lessons were learnt in English.

She respected all their customs and religious rituals, and each of them respected the customs, religion, and traditions of the other.

Maryia was very passionate about research and adored knowing everything with her scientific curiosity. On the contrary, Salma was the opposite of her with her shyness, calmness, and lack of words. In comparison, Maral was very active and distinguished by her piercing eyes that made her focus on everything, as if she wanted to contain the world in her little brain. As for Catherine was from a wealthy family who used to depend on everything on others with her excessive selfishness! And she loves to own it! And she was self-respect too much where she wanted everyone to be a fan of her alone! Unlike them, Maryia was wise, had a sound mind, and a kind heart, as she always offered services to her friends, not wanting any reward or thanks from them.

By chance, Maryia met ‘Issa, the brother of her friend Catherine, who came to the college asking about his sister, and when her eyes fell into his eyes, his eyes brightened, as he was a handsome young man and from a wealthy family, and his parents were very famous physicians who gave birth to him and his sister only. He liked her at first sight, but the traditions of society were narrow and did not allow anything to violate the laws of society. After a month of that beautiful coincidence, she

met him again when she visited the church with her family, so Catherine took her to introduce her to her family, which made ‘Issa shake hands with her and exchanged shy smiles. The two families began to talk with each other as if they had known each other for a long time! Then the father of Maryia offered to visit them at home, and they agreed at once.

The days passed, and the visits between them continued so that the relationship between them became strong. During their visits to Catherine’s family, ‘Issa played the piano for them as a music lover, and everyone applauded him. Maryia was very impressed with ‘Issa and asked him to teach her music, and this was done. He gifted her a red rose on her birthday and her music track. His sister, Catherine, also gifted her a set of rare books, and she found in one of the books a beautiful red flower with a fragrant and distinctive smell, the same smell that she smelled in ‘Issa, and then she realised that this flower was from him and that he exchanged the same feelings for her, and the looks of admiration continued between them, but no one declared love for the other.

Their story was similar to the story of *the Hunter and the Beautiful Girl*. One day the hunter went out in the morning to the forest as usual, and when he started aiming his gun to hunt, his eyes fell on a beautiful girl whom he liked at first sight, and

he felt love towards her, but his shyness prevented him from speaking to her at that time. And the next day, the hunter saw the beautiful girl in the forest again, and he saw her every day in the same place until she got used to her, and she got used to it as well. One day he decided to tell her his love for her and that he desired to marry her, so he went excited that day to the forest, but he did not find her for the first time! He kept waiting for her, and the days rolled by while he was waiting in vain, but she did not come! Until he started looking for her in the city and everyone he met, but to no avail. All he had to do was imagine and paint her, and spread her photograph all over the city, and wrote his address on it.

A few days later, a message came to him from her to make him overwhelmed with great happiness, and he replied that love was the reason for his search for her, then she replied to him with another message in which she told him that she loved him. She wet a message with her tears and drops of her perfume. After exchanging several letters, he told her that he wanted to meet her in the same place in the forest, and after she agreed to the date, the hunter came early, prepared the place, and fetched the engagement ring. When he presented the ring to her, she cried hard and told him that her father had engaged her to a rich man she did not know and did not love him. Therefore, the hunter

immediately went to her father and told him that he desired to marry his daughter, but he refused! The father of the beautiful girl told him that she was engaged to another person, and when he realised that the hunter was insisting on marrying the girl, he told him that if you wanted to marry the girl, you should collect twice as much money of the first man in one week. The hunter came out, but he did not know what to do! The hunter sold as much as he owned and worked all weekday and night, and after the deadline, he could not collect the money! He went to her father's house and found that the engagement party had begun. Tears fell, and he approached little by little to the place of the party, only to find that the suitor was not on the engagement chair! And then her father came out to him smiling and told him that he was the Mr right to marry my daughter. They married and lived together happily ever after.

After 'Issa completed his university studies and Maryia, he sent his sister, Catherine, to hint to Maryia about the engagement, who smiled and fell silent! Then she agreed to him so that joy would radiate in the heart of Catherine and her brother, who made frequent visits to her family's home. Then Catherine's mother formally for telling the family of Maryia that 'Issa desired to marry her. 'Issa, the handsome young physician from a wealthy family, had high morals.

During the engagement, Maryia remembers her confusion when serving coffee to the guests and sitting next to ‘Issa’s mother when the engagement began. Her mother responded that she would tell her husband and that their response would be after a week, and she wished good for both families. Indeed, when he returned from work, she announced to him that he would be engaged. Then the father of Maryia sat down with his daughter, who was at the top of her shyness, and her acceptance was her silence. He assured her that he should ask about him and his family to be assured of her future. And when she became alone, Maryia was very worried, despite her high confidence in ‘Issa and his generous family, but her intense love for him and her interest in him pushed her to the tension that was evident in her, which made her mother hug her when she saw her and reassured her that good is by Almighty Allah.

Her father enjoyed a friendship with some officials in the Ministry of Interior, which made it easy for him to search for ‘Issa, who knew everything about him in just four days, to be assured that his daughter would be in any pleasing young man. He told his spouse and Maryia that he agreed to the groom on the condition; ‘Issa had to solve a riddle he puts to him. And then the tension returned to Maryia, and her joy was interrupted! And when ‘Issa came to him, he told him and gave him one hour to

solve. Which made him immerse himself in a deep of thought, and he started entering and exiting the house on a beautiful moonlit night until he saw the moon appearing in the sky,

﴾*So, he invoked his Lord, "Indeed, I am overpowered, so help* ۝﴿ [1]. [Surat al-Qamar: 10]

So, what was exactly on his mind at that moment? He made him tell her father the mystery so that he would clap for him and say to him,

"*Marry her! You are a pleasing young man.*".

'Issa used to visit them during the engagement period in a boat called *al-Kuffah* [2] every Thursday, enjoying his time with

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(1) The Qur'an (English Meanings and Notes by Saheeh International), Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, Islamic Research Academy, General Department for Research, Writing & Translation.

(2) It was at the beginning of the fifties of the last century, before the overthrow of King Faisal. And during that period, transportation was carried out by means such as al-Kuffah. It was made of bamboo in a circle and then coated with tar. In the past, the crossing in the Tigris River in Baghdad from the Karkh side to the Rusafa side takes place. As for the Euphrates, a water circulation machine was used for irrigation, called water wheels or waterwheels. Men with muscular bodies move the oar, a wedge made of a long plank with a stick resembling a palm at the end. The men who practiced this profession were known as Ballam, who carried people, objects, and even animals with a Kuffah, and sang during the journey, and one of the most famous of them was Hiji Mahdi at that time.

The Dinar was the paper currency, and the coins were the Fils, the five Fils, the ten, and the hundred. The Iraqi Dinar, at that time, was equivalent to eight grams of gold, which is equivalent to thirteen Indian rupees, since the British occupation of Iraq during the First World War.

her, discussing their future with her, and arranging the Henna ceremony and wedding. The family of ‘Issa got on the Kuffah, and they went to buy all the perfumes, gold, and gifts given to the bride, which were given to all members of the bride’s family and put them in wicker baskets.

At the wedding party, Maryia wore more than one evening dress and was adorned with gifts, and everyone danced to the tunes of al-Jalaghi al-Baghdadi (1) and the authentic maqam, and the songs of the singer Salima Murad (2), because wedding parties mainly were for women and men only attended at the engagement ceremony. After the party, Maryia’s mother gave them a fee of Iraqi Dinars, which represented a reasonable amount. She presented several gifts to her groom, including perfume and a watch. ‘Issa also presented gifts to her, clothes, perfume, and jewellery. He is wealthy, and therefore he brought

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Then inflation occurred, and the value of the Dinar fell.

(1) al-Jalaghi al-Baghdadi’s band consisted of Yusef Za‘arour al-Saghir who played the Qanun, Youssef Butto on the Santur, Salih Shumail on the Jawza, and Yehuda Moshe on the Tabla. They were the ones who accompanied Muhammad al-Kabanji to Cairo in 1932. And the word al-Jalghi is a Turkish word meaning group, and its origin came from the phrase chalgi tatusi, meaning a group of amusement parks. This original art has spread widely in Baghdad, in which the band wears an official uniform of the authentic Iraqi heritage, wears the saddle, and sings beautiful songs.

(2) Singer Salima Murad is Jewish, and she had an unforgettable talent.

everything precious and beautiful to the dearest person to his heart. Maryia was keen to design all her wedding dresses herself, as she and her mother engraved the most beautiful inscriptions from the ancient history of Iraq that she had stuck in her memory since childhood; she engraved the Gate of Ishtar, the palace of the King in Babylon, and the Civilisation of Nimrud.

On the other dress, al-Malwiyah, al-‘Asheq Palace, and the dome of the two Imams al-Hadi and al-‘Askari were engraved and written on it in cuneiform the name of her fiancé and her name in the oldest script in history, and the dress of the Abbasid era inspired the design. And on one of the dresses painted the oldest mosques and the oldest inns. Her wedding dresses were unique and gorgeous because she had spent so much time working on them. Not only that, the oldest churches were painted upon covers, the hanging gardens in Babylon, the lyre, and the lute and tapestries.

She was surprised that her Jewish friend, Maral, told her that her family would sell their house and leave towards stability in Palestine! This harrowing news made her cry, and when she told her father that he bought it, who had a fantastic and strategic location although it was old and small. On the basis, she remembered her extreme fear of the mouse when she visited him after owning it with her family, and then her father assured her

that they would demolish it later and build or invest in a house in its place. And the matter did not go unnoticed as she made her wonder about the reasons. The mouse was a large one. The mouse came to the house for food, housing, or hiding. But she never felt comfortable.

On the night of the wedding, her mother gave her a ring that she had given her in childhood. It was one of the seals of the Babylonian era from her Babylonian ancestors. Her father's gift was a great surprise when he gave her the new house he bought from the Jewish family, so Maryia was blissed. The joy of her marriage, the great ring, and the house she benefits from selling or investing. They engaged in conversations on their first married night and kissed the sweetest flowers whose scents permeated the place in an intimate, romantic, and blissful atmosphere.

She later told her spouse, 'Issa, about everything, especially about the miracle ring, where she told him his entire story and assured him that they would be lucky and happy as long as the ring was left with them. Then they agreed to set a date soon to visit the house that her father gave her on her marriage. And all of these events were in the same year in which a new device appeared in which humans spoke in sound and image that was black and white, which was called *Television*,

which astonished people at the time, and they began talking about it everywhere. Because of it, some strange stories happened! Where simple women were wearing the cloak because they were shy about that guy on TV; they thought he was real!

Simplicity and kindness dominated the thinking of most Iraqis at that time, while the other world was developing by the standards of development in that era.

Although Maryia was a good listener of the radio and she has enjoyed the radio of Sawt al-Arab and other local radio stations as was the case with the people who used to hear it in homes and cafes, she asked her spouse for Television that would satisfy her curiosity and make her an advantage over her friends.

Sawt al-Arab Radio had a significant impact in changing the system of government in Iraq from a monarchy to a republic. At that time, the period witnessed the fall of some monarchies and their transformation into republics. Nevertheless, her father always took the path of neutrality and hoped to stand with everyone who served the unity of Iraq. All the figures close to the ruling family in Iraq have left, and new figures have come bearing modern political slogans denouncing colonialism and rejecting imperialism. Every Iraqi wished that the ancient days

of Baghdad would return, as it was the cradle of civilisations, and it was the capital of the Abbasid state.

She was meditating the Muslims as they went to the Masjid in every obligatory way, their men wore the dishdasha and the Arab keffiyeh, and their women wore the veil. Maryia read about the religion of Islam, so she knew that the Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*, urged on Friday (1) to do ablution and apply perfume, and the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, promised a great reward for those who come early for Friday prayer, which is considered the weekly Muslim feast. She would listen to the sermons of Friday filled with preaches that would prove them, increase their faith, and give them insight into their religion and worldly affairs. Therefore, she knew why they made Friday a holiday so that Muslims could devote themselves to worship.

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(1) On Friday, Allah had brought Adam down to earth, and on it, Adam, peace of Allah be upon him, was passed away, and on it, there is an hour of response in which Muslims implore their Lord, and on it, the Day of Judgement comes, and the world ends. The name Friday came from the group and unity when Allah gathers the creation on the Day of Judgement and recompense for their deeds. One of the customs of the people of Iraq is that the family gathers on Fridays and lunch is served, which is often the dolma meal, which is very similar to the vine-leaf cabbage in other countries, and the mother or grandmother does her work, and they engage in conversations with all the family members over lunch, then they drink tea with cardamom.

Maryia learnt everything from her mother, and therefore she was qualified to be responsible for her own house after her marriage, and the custom at that time was for the mother to teach her daughter when she realised everything, especially cooking so that her spouse would not scold her, or say bad words! She also learnt the principles of sewing, embroidery, and knitting from school and her mother or grandmother because clothes were often sewn at home, and ready-made clothes were rarely available.

The family meeting ended; ‘Issa went out with her spouse, and they rented a horse and carriage to go to the house. Maryia loved the horse and carriage because it was an open-top, and the breezes played with her hair while she laughed with her spouse.

They reached the house’s door, and when they opened the door, they found the Mezuzah (1), which people used to bite as a

(1) A belief is like any other culture, such as those who believe that the owl is a jinx for them, while it is an icon of wisdom for others. The Jews believe they invoke God for the mezuzah’s blessings. It is an ironic piece that is fixed on the frame of the main house’s door. And it is the length of the ink pen, and they put their hand on it when entering the house, and they believed that this could protect the house from evil forces. And the name of God is written on it in four letters: *Shaddai*, which means for them the protector of the gates of Israel. The Jews are pessimistic about the black cat, believing that it brings misfortune. If the Jew sees a black cat, they must spit once in the opposite direction to the direction of the cat’s course. And Europeans are pessimistic about the black cat, and from the number thirteen! Arabs are pessimistic about seeing the shoe

belief and superstition, which they thought as preventing evil from the house! Maryia was talking to her spouse, ‘Issa, about beliefs and superstitions. During that, a black cat passed by them, and then, they laughed. Then ‘Issa lit a fire to begin entering little by little into the house, which was as if it had not been opened for a long time! When they opened the first door, they saw an old lantern hanging in one corner of the house.

The sight of the lantern covered in dust took Maryia’s attention, which made them try to clean it of dust and succeed in lighting it. And the image of the mouse was still stuck in Maryia’s mind, who saw it digging at the bottom of the stairs! They continued to wander around the house until they reached the sitting room, which was furnished with an old and inherited mattress, and in the window, there was a candlestick carrying seven candles, and when they looked at it, ‘Issa told her that it was the Jewish Menorah (1).

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upside down! But if the shoes are one on top of the other for the Baghdadis, it is a travel sign. They demand their children return it to its normal position because they think that it is not suitable for the bottom of the shoe to face the sky! Arabs see the shoes as an expression of humiliation, so often when there was a problem between the women of the neighbourhood, the woman would throw her shoes in the face of her opponent. As if she says to her: Your value is as low as the value of the shoes.

(1) This Menorah is considered sacred by the Jews, who see it as a symbol of their religious symbols, and a symbol of their Hebrew state after the

On her hand, Maryia was wearing the gemstone ring, which she was looking at from time to time, and she showed her spouse her great optimism about the ring, which she thought would bring them a treasure. And then they proceeded to walk inside the dark house, even though they had entered it during the day! Then they started looking for a knife that they found in the old chests of the kitchen. At that time, ‘Issa was astonished and surprised by the end that Maryia aspired to her. She pulled him from his hand. They walked towards the staircase in the middle of the house. It was closed from the bottom, and in the middle of it was a small hole dug by that mouse she had seen earlier!

Then she started digging amid profound astonishment at her spouse, who thought she was insane! While Maryia was engrossed in digging, she felt that she had hit something thick! And then her spouse intervened by helping to lift the plank under which was a coffin, all of its tyres shining gold! They tried their best to get the box out, but they were unable to do so. They were at the top of optimism and joy, and ‘Issa suggested that she return the next day and bring digging tools to help them get the box out of the hole. He asked her not to tell anyone about this, and she

occupation of Palestine, and behind it appears in blue with olive branches the word Israel in grey because they consider olives as a source of lighting, and it was used in the past in lighting Al-Aqsa Masjid. A symbol of freedom, the Jews printed it on their coins.

promised him to fulfil that promise. Then she made herself wonder if what she saw was a buried corpse, a mummy, or a treasure?

The next day, they went home and prepared the drilling tools, and Maryia was wearing her ring, the ring of fortune that she was speaking to as if she was speaking to a human being! And she felt great happiness and power when you wore it. And after they supplicated their Lord, they proceeded to dig to the right and left of the box to make it easier for them to get it out, and when ‘Issa and his spouse hit the surface of the box with the pickaxe, they knew that it had hit metal or something solid! That made them optimistic.

But they were not in a hurry, as they remained for a period estimated at several hours until the box was ready to be taken out quickly, and in moments the box was in front of them contemplating its luxurious wood decorated with a lacquer of shiny gold, and when looked at it more they found that its locks are also of gold! So that Maryia had a great sense of joy and happiness for her dream that came true for her and embraced ‘Issa with enthusiasm, fascination, and passion. And when they broke the locks, they had a great scene of joy. That moment Maryia considered to be one of her most beautiful happy moments, as the box contained rare and ancient pots, which were

of pure gold and precious jewels inlaid with them, and jars full of gold coins that date back to ancient date, perhaps For the Sumerian or Babylonian era, it was printed with the image of the King of Kings, who may have been Nebuchadnezzar.

Then ‘Issa went out and rented a horse-drawn carriage, whose owner was astonished when he took out a box covered with rags from an old house! ‘Issa replied that they were household items he would like to transfer to his family, and when they arrived, Maryia’s mother was surprised by the strange sight of the box! Maryia quickly replied that it was her and her husband’s things. Then they all gathered around a table with a plate of okra broth, amber rice, and dill, in addition to the barhi dates that characterise the land of Iraq.

After lunch, ‘Issa enjoyed with her in the courtyard of the house, in a particular family meeting, where the sky was clear, and flocks of birds hovered in space, and among those birds was the storks, which was standing safely on the beacons of Baghdad masjids and churches. And it is only moments, and drops of rainfall do not give the moment a special feeling and a smell like camphor. ‘Issa was afraid that the rain would harm his spouse, so he entered the house and brought an umbrella for Maryia, and after an excellent time, he asked her permission and left for his affairs.

Maryia entered the house and opened the windows to let in the beautiful smell of rain. And when she looked outside, she saw a rainbow in the sky, that scene that reminded her of her childhood, which made her make two cups of grapes and sit next to her mother in a magic family moment in which they let themselves go to call to mind the old memories and listened to the beautiful music of Nazim al-Ghazali, who was famous in that beautiful time.

After she had enjoyed her guitar [(1)] a little, she told her mother that would tell her a secret when her father came from work, who came back from work, Maryia had fallen asleep, and when he told her mother that it was not time for her to sleep. Maryia said to him, angrily, that she ignored me because she had gone to the old house without her knowledge. It was a thing he went and sat down upon her bed and woke her, and before they spoke, he caught his eye the strange box in her room! Which prompted him to ask about him; Maryia smiled and told him, this is a surprise to you both. Then she came with him to her mother, and she kissed on the top of her mother and apologised to her. Then they returned to her room to tell them that she had found the treasure, which made them surprised and thought she was

([1]) The first guitar in history was in Iraq, which the British keep today in their museums in the British capital.

joking! Until she told them the details and her efforts with ‘Issa to bring him home. Her father opened the box and was amazed by the jewels and gold in it! Then they closed it and began to talk about this heavenly gift.

Her father told her that they should value the gold coin and sell it or sell something, demolish the old house, and then they build a new building in its place because it is in a prominent commercial location that secures Maryia and her family a fantastic future. She asked to be responsible for planning the construction of the new architecture, as she suggested that its planning is on top of the old Abbasid Baghdadi style of arches and Mashrabyiah and that under the architecture, there should be a market above the cafe and Khan, which is the hotel. Her father promised to study all these suggestions with his friend, an expert in Kurdish construction, *Farhad,* who had invited him to attend the Nowruz festival [1].

([1]) Nowruz is the festival of spring and the tree, and it is considered the Persian New Year’s Day, but the Kurds of Iraq also celebrate it, and it falls on March 21. Nowruz is a Persian word meaning *New Day*. It was celebrated by the Sassanids who ruled Persia, and the Abbasids used to present gifts to the Persians on the Feast of Nowruz. It represents a cultural identity and a national holiday for the Kurds because they rose against King Dahhak. It is also a cultural heritage in which a table of food is placed in which seven foods start with the letter “Sin” and is called a trip. The Seven Years Another custom is the appearance of Hajj Fairouz wearing red and dyeing his face black, then they sing folk songs, poems,

When they went to the Nowruz festival, they found that *Farhad* had prepared sacrifices and feasts, and everyone was welcoming them in Kurdish and Arabic. They had houses made of straw and mud, and they had vast farms of cotton and wheat, and the land was green, flat, beautiful, and the weather was clear, and everything was colourful. The wonderful folk music, Dabke, and then the dance began. Afterwards, it was time for food when they drank soup *Trichinella* (1), a special soup that makes the body feel warm, especially since northern Iraq has cold weather. After they had eaten, they visited the citadel of Kirkuk (2), and saw the eternal fire of the oil fields, and saw the Bedouins' Madarib. Despite their distant journey, they did not fear for the treasure they kept in their home because Iraq was safe, and people lived a simple and comfortable life at that time. A few days later, Maryia went with 'Issa to buy something from the gold and some items from the river market (3), and while they

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dances and dances, women and men dressed in Kurdish clothes.

(1) Trichinella soup consists of grains and dried milk, then onions are added, and its taste tends to be slightly acidic.

(2) The citadel of Kirkuk contains the oldest civilisation there, where the excavators found the oldest agricultural machine made of a sickle made of rock, dating back to eight thousand years.

(3) The river market was called by several names, including: (Bride Street, Girls Street, and River Street) and it is a place where you see the beauty, elegance, and nature of the taste of Iraqi women, as it is one of the largest markets for jewellery, clothes, jewellery, fabrics, makeup, and perfumes.

were in the market, Maryia met an old friend, and after peace and hugs, she invited them to her wedding, Maryia wrote her address precisely on a piece of paper and promised her to come.

The days passed quickly, and she went with her mother and mother-in-law 'Issa to her friend's marriage, Karima, in the village of the Salf [(1)], where Abu Hatim welcomed them very much. He prepared a large room of reeds and papyrus with arched ceilings, which distinguishes the homes of the people of the villages in the marshes on The Euphrates River, East of Iraq, at the border opposite Iran. He served them a meal that consisted of *Tabek*, which is fish, and then he gave them *Barhi* dates, and they slept early because the village's people rose early and went to their agricultural work [(2)], where they often planted rice, they

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It is the window of Iraqi women on international fashion at that time. To its south is the Al-Ahrar Bridge, overlooked by the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce, and the Tigris River is located on one of its sides, and that is why the market names the narrow river street, in which vehicles do not drive, in addition to some hotels that overlooked it (such as Khan al-Nabaka, al-Namla, and al-Khudayri).

Among the famous goldsmiths in that market was Mr Hilal Zahroun on Al-Kut Street near the Al-Bajaji Masjid and the Khafafeen Mosque, built in the Abbasid era in the middle of Al-Nahr Street, located in the building of the Central Bank of Iraq. Then comes the Daniel market, concerning the first seller, Daniel the Jew, specialising in selling sewing supplies.

([1]) The people of the village of Salf are relatives, and their homes were close to each other. It was built with reeds and fronds. The method of transporting water for them was through mashuf, which includes palms.

([2]) The village women were mowing grass for buffaloes and sheep, and

made cream, butter, and yoghurt from cow's milk. Therefore, for breakfast, Abu Hatim offered them cream with hot bread, tea, yoghurt, and dates, and the moments of their breakfast were accompanied by a warm welcome from his wife, who was wearing *Garghad*, and the fragrant Arab smell was wafting from her clothes, she had a tattoo on her beautiful and very soft white face.

At night, there was the henna party in which the women sang before the groom was married from his house to the bride's house with songs, which is the oldest type of recitation, and some of them recited poetic poems. The bride dressed the best suit when her spouse arrived, and she wore the white veil and covered her face, then the women took her to the wedding party, which was very beautiful and joyful, and in which men wore the dishdasha, which was sewn by hand, and engraved with silk threads, and who fired live bullets to rejoice at the grooms, and the night of joy ended with great happiness.

Maryia had heard about the Antiquities of the city of Amarah. So, her family brought Maryia the next day on a trip to historical monuments such as the Great Ziggurat of Ur (1). And

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they were raising chickens. They did not buy anything from the market because it was far from them and inaccessible, so they were satisfied with the food they had their production.

(1) The most important monuments in Amarah and Dhi Qar are the

when they rode with the tour guide, he was old. Then he told her about the difference between Amarah and Dhi Qar. He told her that Nasser Pasha al-Saadoun founded the State of al-Muntafiq, and Nasiriyah is the centre of the Dhi Qar Governorate.

Their political guide on the trip was this old, older man showing the wrinkles of time and signs of aging, and he wore keffiyeh on his head streaked with black and white, and a black headband, and he wore a dishdasha. The people of southern Iraq, and about marvellous historical glimpses of the ancient history of Iraq, and the tour guide was not satisfied with that, as he told them about something from the history of the Sabeans, such as their marriage rituals, where the marriage ceremony is not performed until they enter the water and reach the waist of each one of them! Master the profession of goldsmithing.

They returned to their home in Baghdad, and Maryia was happy to see her green-eyed Persian cat, *Lulu*. After having a shower, she fell into a deep sleep after a long journey.

Great Ziggurat of Ur, a temple 40 km west of Nasiriyah. Ur is a Sumerian archaeological site located in Tell el-Muqayyar, which is the temple of the moon god (Anana) when it was the capital of the Sumerians before two thousand and one hundred BC, and in the city of (The Ziggurat) the Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him, was born two thousand years BC. It contains sixteen royal tombs, each of which is topped by a dome, and in each tomb, there is a well, and the king is buried upon his death with his female slaves and clothes and everything he owns after killing the slave girls by poison.

My country, even if it has strayed from me, is dear;

And my family, even if stingy, is generous.

